

# LEKE ALDER



# #NOVUS

A Business Development Twitter Novel

SEASON ONE / THE BEGINNING

LEKE ALDER



# #NOVUS

A Business Development Twitter Novel

SEASON ONE / THE BEGINNING

 @Leke\_Alder

#NOVUS Copyright © January 2013 by Leke Alder. All rights reserved. Published by Alder Media.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Request to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to:

Alder Media

U.K.

33 St. James's Square  
London, SW1 Y 4JX  
T. +44 (020) 30086027  
F. +44 (020) 30088555

Nigeria

1 Ajose Adeogun Street  
(by Ligali Ayorinde Street)  
Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria  
+234 (01) 270-5408/9

Leke Alder will like to hear from you:



leke@lekealder.com



Leke Alder fan page on  
facebook



www.lekealder.com



@Leke\_Alder

## A WORD FROM LEKE ALDER

---

It's unimaginable that #NOVUS is FREE!  
Yet it is!

It all started as a creative challenge I dreamed up. I wanted to write an entire novel on my phone, to be published on Twitter.

I wrote a chapter a day and edited in real time as I uploaded on Twitter. Quite a challenge it turned out. You have to write in interconnected verses which make individual sense. I wanted to make business knowledge entertaining and fun. And that was how #NOVUS came about! It is an exploration of the goings on in the head of a young entrepreneur. It doesn't hurt that he has a rather beautiful girlfriend.

And the reaction to #NOVUS astounded all of us at Alder Consulting! In February 2013, bits and pieces of #NOVUS had reached a million people!

It is my hope and desire that those people plus other millions who will download this eBook version have a HEART OF COMPASSION towards ORPHANS. We have gone to great pains to create this beautiful eBook edition TO RAISE MONEY for the 9 ORPHANAGES supported by my foundation – LEKE ALDER FOUNDATION. Please donate as you download.

You will get all the information you need at [lekealderfoundation.org](http://lekealderfoundation.org).

And if you have enquiries email [info@lekealderfoundation.org](mailto:info@lekealderfoundation.org). I'll be posting how much we raise on my Twitter

page and list our donors on  
[www.lekealderfoundation.org](http://www.lekealderfoundation.org) (You can  
donate anonymously). Thank you as you  
donate. May the good Lord show you  
mercy.

Leke Alder  
April 2013

Don is a 26-year old going on 27. He has a crazy dream of starting a business but has no idea what to do.

Along his path comes a beautiful woman - a conspiracy of nature - Rasha! But a femme fatale lurks in the wings.

Follow Leke Alder as he takes you through the process of business conceptualisation, and so much more!

# CONTENTS

---

- One From the inside
- Two Something emerges
- Three Executive dining
- Four Baba the baba
- Five Evil capacitor
- Six Enter the float
- Seven What is it?
- Eight Relativity
- Nine Five minutes earlier
- Ten What's in a name?
- Eleven Rims and spokes
- Twelve A little extra
- Thirteen Organiser
- Fourteen Mr. Valentinus

## CONTENTS (continued)

---

- Fifteen** No orphan allowed
- Sixteen** Foraging for heaviness
- Seventeen** Going for a drink
- Eighteen** Windfall
- Nineteen** Financing a dream
- Twenty** Nothing for nothing
- Twenty-one** The witch of Endor



# Chapter One

*From the inside*

It was Sunday 6pm. Don sat on a sofa watching his life evolve around him, his understanding unfruitful. He stared at the world; saw himself in it yet somehow out of it. It seemed an out of body experience, like seeing yourself looking at yourself from yourself as you gaze at yourself. He felt lonely, lost even. This wasn't the way he pictured life - not a few years after graduation: his dreams moving away! And he felt helpless. His dreams of youth were engaging in a disappearing act, like a magician's sleight of hand.

He had a degree in Economics, but realised he knew next to nothing about real world economics, or much of anything.

Don is brilliant, has a good job, is in between relationships (if you can call it that) and floundering. Life drove him and Temi apart. He dated Temi for so long he didn't know how to move on. His work had become routine and unchallenging. It's so routine he can spend an entire day at work blindfolded with no mistakes.

What do you do when you're 26 going on 27 with stirrings of entrepreneurship in your breast and no business idea? And so he sat in his house this Sunday, pondering what to do with his life. He alternated his thoughts with swigs of Coke. He got up, paced the room barefoot, up and down, his jeans carefree, his torso unshirted.

Why not go into food business, he thought. But then he realised he knew nothing about food business. Hardly cooks! He has two lovely sisters and a wonderful mother, he being the last born. His sisters fawn on him just as his mum does. You can't pick up cooking skills in such circumstances. He'll never attempt to woo a woman with culinary expertise! There is a big market for food no doubt. There must be money in it. Everyone eats, everyone MUST eat! But how do you go into a business you know nothing about? It's called gambling. He knew not to gamble. Can't afford it. Not with limited resources. Yes, everyone says food sells but then he wondered, why aren't all food vendors rich and successful? Why just some? He decided to formulate simple laws to guide his lust for enterprise - laws to protect him, just in case:

- a) I will not go into a business I'm not interested in.
- b) I will not go into a business I have no skills for.
- c) A business may seem lucrative but if I know nothing about it I'll not venture into it.

He vaguely remembered someone asking a business guru on Twitter, "What small scale business can easily multiply your capital?" The guru replied cryptically, "None!" But then went on to explain that business takes time to develop. Don thought about this, rolled it in his head like water around a tongue. His enterprise must be able to hold his attention. He had to have passion for whatever business he decides upon. It's not enough to follow the money. Thus he added

three more laws to the other three:

- d) I will not go into a business which cannot hold my interest.
- e) I will not go into a business to which I cannot devote my attention.
- f) I will not go into a business for which i have no passion.

He repeated all the laws to himself, speaking them in affirmation:

- a) I will not go into a business I'm not interested in.
- b) I will not go into a business I have no skills for.

- c) A business may seem lucrative but if I know nothing about it I'll not venture into it.
- d) I will not go into a business which cannot hold my interest.
- e) I will not go into a business to which I cannot devote my attention.
- f) I will not go into a business for which I have no passion.

The six laws seemed basic but he knew from Economics that profound things are always basic.



## Chapter Two

*Something emerges*

A picture slowly emerged in Don's head. Certain words began to dance to the surface in the pool of his thoughts, like lifebuoys - IDEA WORDS: interest...passion...knowledge...skill... He surmised these words were critical to business development. He took another swig at his Coke, rolled the words in his head, ran his fingers through his half inch hair, and paced up and down. "I won't go into a line of business 'cos someone says it makes money...that's anecdotal not research based... Not smart! I must do my own research. I must conduct my own feasibility study... Sounds like a big

word but it's simply, Is the business feasible? I must ask questions from those who are in the business, or know about the business. Better learn than be sorry! Neither will I go into a business 'cos it's the flavour of the month... The laws of Economics will naturally doom such. Everyone rushes into flavours of the month. The only problem is, soon supply outstrips demand. And prices crash! Dreams too!"

The more Don thought about his thoughts the more convinced he was that this was the beginning of "something." He sat on the arm of his couch, a ball of nervous energy, alone with his thoughts, alone with himself, pondering the future. It was getting late. The next day was Monday. He needed to sleep, needed to rest his brain. He stretched himself, stifled a yawn and retired to bed

with stirrings of hope in his heart. Something was cooking.

---

But he woke up the next morning with a different reality. His ideas didn't seem feasible in the real world. It was as if he thought of his ideas in a virtual reality world, a higher dimension, and exited into our 3D world! Discouragement began beating on his ideas like a school bully taking on a scrawny small boy at break. His ideas didn't seem as realised as they were in his head. He didn't understand. He felt deflated like a punctured pipe dreamer. With his thoughts a swirling vortex of entropy in his head, he clung to a glimmer of hope, stubbornly. He WANTED his idea to work.

He arrived early to work. As he walked

down the corridor he vaguely remembered saying good morning to his colleagues. He stared at the 42 inch plasma TV against the wall as he crossed the floor reception. It was tuned to CNN.

Piers Morgan was on TV, taking on the National Rifle Association with trademark caustic British barb. He passed the TV just as Piers was lounging into a gun advocate. Obama has his work cut out for him, he thought. *His* work was cut out too! He was still blank on ideas. An idea came into his head but when he thought about it, he quickly dismissed it. He would do a lot of good with the idea but no one will pay for it. It sounded more like an idea for a non-profit, or charity. Of what use is a business idea no one will pay for? He cocked his head to one side, said "Hmn!" in his head and gave the statement some more thought.

The fact that a need exists for a product or service doesn't make the proposition a business idea. If people won't pay for a proposed product or service, it's not a business idea. Perhaps when he's successful he can revisit the idea. He can then use his money to do lots of good, just like Bill Gates. For him that's one good reason to go into business: to multiply resources to do good on earth. That's a motivation for success. But until then...bye bye charity idea!

He took a sheet of paper and wrote down the following words: "It's not a business idea if no one will pay for it." Writing gave him clarity. The complement is of course, "It's not a VIABLE business idea if enough people won't pay for it!" He wrote this as well. It was 7.55am.

He sat in his chair, and swivelled it away from his thoughts to concentrate on the work of Bancorp International.



## Chapter Three

*Executive dining*

The day went fast, faster than most. His number crunching was fast, his analytics succinct. At break time he proceeded to the executive dining floor, the famed 11th Floor. It's a senior executive dining space but junior executives in the corporate leadership program can also dine there. It's a good way to acquaint oneself to corporate seniors. They are the deciders of fate and fortune. He took a seat at the far end of the room. His table overlooked the bay. He loves staring into the watery distance.

The vastness of the ocean, the endless horizon reminds him of possibilities... of Dubai... Nothing is impossible to a believer. He sat there, alone with his thoughts. He philosophised on water, its essential nature: ideas must be watered with thought!

He felt a pair of eyes boring into him. Maybe two pairs. He looked up and saw Rasha staring at him. As well as Nike. Nike is Rasha's BFF. Rasha tried to avert her eyes but it was too late. He waved his fork at her. He felt like a fly under the microscope. You know how you feel when two girls have had a conference on you? That's how he felt! Despite the sense of scrutiny, he felt a warm glow spread to his heart. Kind of felt good. At this he smiled in his brain. Rasha is a conspiracy of nature. A living visual confectionary of delight... Poise, grace and elegance in strategic alliance... Her dress

sense is impeccable, an ode to Calvin Klein. Add intellect and kindness to the mix and you'll understand young men's ambitious designs on her! An LSE graduate, they met at Emeka's party over the summer. He was surprised, shocked at how easily they clicked. He is however afraid of a rebound relationship. He doesn't want to hurt her. You don't hurt a Rasha. Life will be unkind to you. Turned out they had mutual friends and Rasha's cousin was Don's flat mate in university. She's probably wondering why he hasn't followed up. The traffic light was unambiguously green. She likes him!

He sighed wistfully to himself. He had a sense of inevitability. His mum will love her! He had a strange desire to walk to her table, pull her to his table and share his dream with her. But what's there to share? He had

no idea! Just an idea about having an idea! He learnt a long time ago that it's never wise to share an idea without flesh and bones. When obvious holes are poked into the idea, discouragement comes. It can turn to malice! He learnt that lesson in the course of his work. He once had an epiphany on using predictive tools to analyse consumer loan default probability. Unfortunately, he hadn't considered the exceptions. He ended up embarrassing himself in front of his supervisor. Fortunately, he was very understanding having made a similar mistake as a young analyst at Barclays.

Never rush out with an idea of an idea. Work out your idea to an appreciable level, and even at that you can't communicate early stage thinking to everyone. That's what Mr. Tyler told him. He saw Rasha walk

out with Nike. He suddenly lost appetite, though he was unsure why. Perhaps it was Rasha. Or perhaps it was the reality of a lack of ideas.



## Chapter Four

*Baba the baba*

Don left the cafeteria and took the elevator down to the 5th floor, Rasha's floor. He felt emotionally lonely. He needed to share his entrepreneurship burden. For reasons he can't understand he felt a kinship with her. There's something about her his sisters can't provide... They'll listen to him no doubt, but they can't comfort him. He needed a "comfort board", not a sounding board. Not yet. A sounding board will come later. A comfort board is someone to bounce off ideas with and from whom no significant input is expected.

A listening ear who's interested in your dreams, sometimes bemused, but totally supportive. It's about you, not so much the idea. He or she is keen on the progression of the idea, chips in a word or two, offers suggestions and allows you be. He or she is happy for you, identifies with you, and the dream. That's a comfort board. He felt that kinship with Rasha.

As he rounded the corner to her office, he bumped into Justus. Justus is a burly and bubbling fellow. "What brings you to our floor?! Eh big man!" he asked gregariously, slapping his shoulder. Justus should have been a wrestler, he thought. He silently thanked God Justus didn't probe further. He was already muttering and stammering. He looked into the distance towards Rasha's office. He was disappointed she wasn't there. His spirit deflated. "Hi!" said a voice.

He was startled! The pleasant decibel of a disembodied female voice in his left ear startled him. He turned to the direction of the voice and caught a glimpse of Rasha's dress. His heart began to palpitate in cardiac unrhythm, like an excited canine breed in rapture. It was a simple red dress. It was wrapped in the slight embrace of a slim brown leather belt with gold link chain. Somehow, it triggered an avalanche of upwardly cascading clarity. He saw the dress, but it wasn't about the dress. A random leap of insight proceeded from a random question produced from deep inside the convoluted wiring of the brain: HOW DO YOU CARE FOR SUCH A DRESS? His brain entered a time warp.

His head became a canister, opened at the top, unscrewed, unlidded... Words and images rushed in at the speed of

enlightenment...like the jolt from a temporal lobe: dress/red/cotton/brown/poly/White/collar/starch/wash/office/service/men/cuff... In that instant it came!

IT CAME!! He KNEW what to do now! He knew what-to-do! "Thank you, thank you, thank YOU...!" he danced! Rasha stared at him, incredulous, confused! But even in confusion she was stunning, her arching brow a beckoning. He ran back towards the elevator. It was clear to him now! His business idea had come! On his ride to the sixth floor, he replayed the blazing sequence of thought: HOW DO YOU CARE FOR SUCH A DRESS triggered a random access memory sequence of his "Washaman" - a washing machine human equivalence. His Washaman, Baba. (God bless his soul) would have damaged Rasha's dress in a very talented manner. Somehow

he had gotten it into his head that clothes need punishment. And so he would take scrubbing brush, the sort with unrepentant bristles and punish the collar of a shirt. He took the stains out no doubt but he also took out the collar! Perhaps you've found yourself wearing such a shirt, a shirt with a perfectly tattered collar. Don was in such a situation and unfortunately it was a high level meeting. Baba the Washaman had so taken out the fibres on his shirt collar he resembled a beggarly element. He didn't realise it until after the meeting, in the bathroom! He should have checked the collar at home but who checks collars! That proved one damaged shirt too many. He sacked Baba the Washaman from the toilet!

Creativity can be stimulated from a free association of words and images from subjects of interest, he realised. Much like a

rapper freestyling his thoughts. The thoughts are images. His words are idea words sequenced like DNA. His association of words and images progressed to the stunning clarity of a simple question: What if he replaced Baba the Washaman and starts taking care of his and Rasha's laundry? It was a simple but powerful idea because it fulfilled a need: there are many Babas out there damaging the shirts of many Dons out there! The Dons need me! "I am the new Baba! I can do Baba better than Baba!"



## Chapter Five

*Evil capacitor*

As one can imagine, Don's day flew like a shuttle. The sun was shining ever so brightly, its radiance streaking through his soul, and the huge glass wall. It was January 31st and the year had just begun. He rolled up his sleeves, like John F. Kennedy in the Oval Office, pulled out his chair and got down to work. An alert popped up on his Bloomberg terminal. Thinking it was a derivative update he clicked it open. "Hello Gorgeous!" A puzzle quizzed his face. He looked up with consternation, thought he saw the flicker of a snigger on Femi's face. But then it disappeared.

Femi is an unusual name for a girl. Almost like a woman bearing John. Her friends and foes (she has more of the latter) shortened the name to FF. It's a label she wears proudly. If you're wondering how "Femi" can become "FF" please be informed that it stands for femme fatale! And that's not on account of her voluptuous physiological configuration. It is a measure of evil capacity.

She's one of the earliest members of staff at Bancorp International, understands the ins and outs of office politics. She's a transportation hub of gist, a robust router gear of gossip and slander. Cisco router has nothing on her! Buxom and figure-eight-ive, she has a thing for clothes and fancies bright red talons. The thing about Femi is her incredible energy focusing capability. She brings to bear her force of conviction

on everything she does, whether right or wrong. It's a religious terrorist mindset and she's decided on her next target - Don! She literally has him in her sights.

And so the day went and night came but Don was unaware. "Aren't you going home, Don?" Stephen shouted across the office. Don was bathing in the ethereal euphoria of discovery on two levels: Project X and Rasha. He packed his stuff, picked his car key and headed for home. He wasn't in a hurry today. He needed to savour the ideas, abstract and relational in his skull. He got home, kicked off his shoes, loosened his tie, unbuttoned his shirt and pulled out his belt. A bit comfortable now, he sat at his desk and pulled a sheet of paper from his HP printer tray. The concept of the business captivated him. He needed to define the proposition, but he was a bit too

excited for coherence but he went ahead anyway: Young male professionals in demanding jobs can't afford the time for preppy laundry.

They have reasonable income but they lack inclination, and time for laundry chores. If I can take those chores off them; if I can deliver six fresh shirts on Sunday to a young male executive...he's sorted out! On the piece of paper, he drew a crude representation of an executive. He circled the figure and drew radiant spokes out from the circle like a bicycle rim. On one spoke he wrote "Demographics." On another he wrote "Psychographics." On the other he wrote "Valu prop" (for value proposition). On another he wrote "Price tolerance range"... And then "Competition." Then "Marketing," then "Equipment," and then "Location." After that "Finance" and lastly

"HR." At the top of the paper he wrote "MIND MAP."

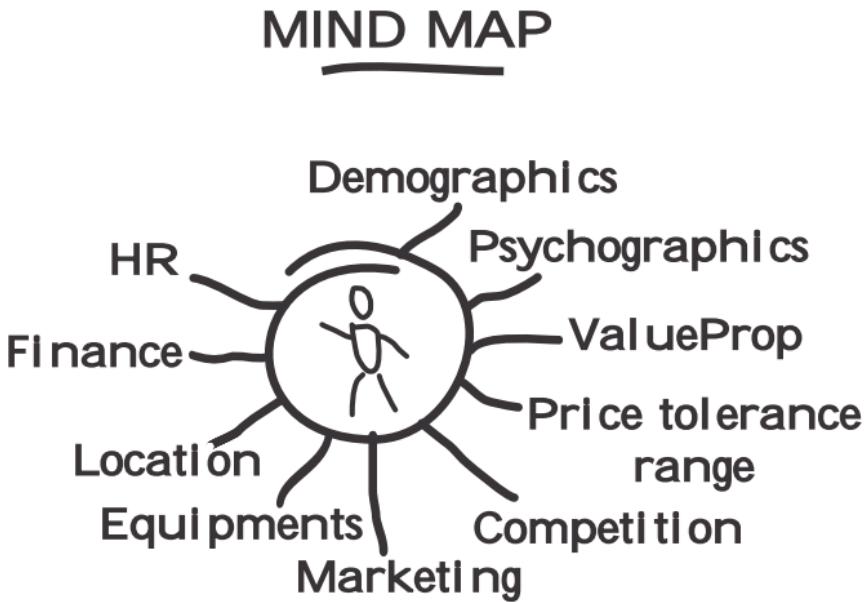


Fig.1 Don's Mind Map

It was crude looking but it gave him a bird's eye view. He drew a diagonal across and past the circle on either pole, creating two hemispheres. Demographic, Psychographic, Value Proposition, Price Tolerance & Range were in one hemisphere. Every other

thing was in the other hemisphere. Essentially, he divided the two hemispheres into one for the customer, the second for the business. The client hemisphere is organised along a simple line of questions:

- a) What are the business demographics? Average customer age, sex, basic stats...
- b) What are the phychographic traits of the customer? (This is a lifestyle analysis).
- c) What is the value proposition of the business? What is he really selling?
- d) What price range can the customer afford or tolerate?

## What's too high? What's too low?

These are the questions regarding the customer. He paused to avoid processing overload. Funny how the brain is like a computer, or is it the other way round? The body is the hardware. The brain is the processor. The thought the data. Our philosophy of life the operating system. "Don, that's enough!" he rebuked himself. He clearly needed a diversion. Enough thinking for the day. He switched on his B+O ipod player using the puck; press played John Tropea, Smooth Jazz Guitar: Can't hide love. It was 9.30pm. He picked up his mobile phone and dialled Rasha.



## Chapter Six

*Enter the flow*

Her voice floated through the ether into the sitting room saturated with octaves of jazz. Her voice was husky. He must have woken her from sleep. "Did I wake you?"

"It's okay. How are you?"

"I'm fine. Working on some stuff. Needed to hear your voice." She liked the sound of that! She smiled as her brain took in the gulp of oxygenated words. "What stuff? And what happened at work today? You were...weird". She was of course referring to his eureka moment.

"I'll explain when we meet..."

"In the office?" She was baiting him; knew he was talking social but a girl's got to pretend!

"Oh no! Ice Cream Factory okay by you?  
After work?"

"Are you asking me out on a date?"

"Hmn hmnl"

"Is that a yes?!"

"Hmn hmnl"

"What if I have a previous engagement?"

"Cancel it!"

"Cancel it?!" She had a bemused, gentle, happy smile on her face. It ran its course to her navel.

"Cancel it!"

"Why should I?"

"Cos I'm taking you out!"

"Isn't there...erm...a LOT of assumption riding on that?"

She was thrilled to her stomach of course;

her heart was fluffy.

"Just a statement of fact! (Though facts have fundamental assumptions)." "And what might the assumptions be in this case Mr. Donald Pearce?" she asked slyly, slipping in a request for definitiveness.

"Pays to find out!"

"By going on a date with you?!"

"Good observation!"

"My brother will shoot you!"

"Is he related to Dick Cheney?"

"Very funny!"

"You have a history of violence in the family?"

"We have the movie," and turning the table on him asked, "Do you?"

"A history of violence? I do actually!"

"Really?" she asked nervously.

"Yep! I fight for what I want!"

"What do you want?" She wanted him to

commit.

"Find out!"

"You're impossible!"

"It's a date then?"

"It's a date!" she replied emphatically, pleasantly.

"See you tomorrow!" She was thrilled to hear his assertiveness. He's taking charge, she told herself. She likes that in a man. But what's Don without that quiet confidence...that self assurance? Will surely give some people complex. But she was drawn to him.

She smiled at the thought, her dimples accentuating the ethereal beauty of her face in the dark of night.

She laid down on her side, curled into fetal position, her hands clasped between her legs. Her pinky white baby teddy bear

pajamas trousers rode up her leg. "Oh nooo! Nike's going to kill me!" She had promised Nike she'll accompany her to check out some shoes. She sighed deeply and turned her body. She then switched off her bedside lamp. She had sweet dreams! And so did he!

---

Don woke up the next morning very refreshed. The night seemed a dream. What was that?! He smiled and sang in jazz. He pulled out of bed, went into the bathroom, and mowed down the stubble on his face with his Braun shaver. He took his bath, patted his face with CK Euphoria aftershave. It was hot, and peppery! As he prepared for work he walked over to his table and surveyed his diagram once more. Reading in reverse, the words leapt at him:

price tolerance range, value proposition, psychographic traits, demographics... "I have to populate each of these headers." He looked at the other half of his diagram: Competition, marketing, equipment, location, finance, HR... These are the other headers. But who's the competition? And who's the ECONOMIC competition? An economic competitor is distinct from a trade competitor. A trade competitor competes for market share. An economic competitor competes for the customer's pocket share. Coca-Cola and Pepsi are trade competitors but bottled water is an economic competitor to both! Explains Why Coca-Cola started manufacturing Eva water.

The company fights for soda market share with Pepsi but fights for pocket share with bottled water. He pursed his lips, slipped on

his watch and looked at the time. "Jeez! I'm going to be late!" He gathered his stuff, ran down the stairs and jumped into his car, banging the door. He started his engine, kicked the car into gear and drove out of the parking lot. "Today is going to be a beautiful day", he said to himself. And he started thinking of Rasha...



## Chapter Seven

*What is it?*

At Milverton junction, he switched back to his diagram. He had it memorised by now. He thought of the other headers on his bicycle wheel mind map. But then it occurred to him he might be getting ahead of himself. Yes, competitor analysis, marketing, equipment, location, finance and HR are very important considerations; but he hasn't addressed the most fundamental of all considerations: What IS the business?! That seemed so elementary, indeed should be skipped, but since he's being methodical and thorough he'll address it.

...If only to fulfill all righteousness. Well, it's quite easy he thought. I'm going into the drycleaning business... He was about to move on to other things in his head when he realised that that didn't sound right. It is NOT a dry cleaning business! Ok, specialist laundry then but is it? Sounds like specialist hospital though!

Both lines of business employ the use of bleach but that's as far as he'll go in pushing the analogy. Cloth care? No, garment care! But doesn't that sound suspiciously like an existing business? Isn't that kind of like concept plagiarism of someone else's business? Who knows why they chose "Garment Care"? How's he going to distinguish himself selling a pirated business concept whose roots he knows nothing about? It occurred to him that a lot of people do this. They just take on another

person's business concept without understanding. Because it didn't proceed from them, when challenges come they don't know what to do. "I can't just xerox a concept. I'm certainly not going into CARING for garments! That's not the idea." So, now he knows what the business is not, but what IS the business? He scratched his head north to south and back north. He can't define the obvious?! And then he realised the question was not quite so simple even though he assumed it was. "How many people can readily describe what they do?" he asked himself, as if looking for comfort. How many have bothered to ask: What is my business? What do I do? Or provided answers in simple terms? One must be able to define his endeavour in plain English. If you can't define your business, how will you market

it? If you can't define your business, how will the customer know what you're selling? And how then can you make money? If the customer is confused he can't easily match his needs to your business offerings. He won't know what to buy! And a business definition must not need explanation to customers. How efficient is that? Impossible in certain instances.

At that he recalled the many business cards he's tossed into the trash can the next day after an event. It occurred to him that he tossed them because he couldn't make sense of what the businesses were all about. Young entrepreneurs are particularly guilty of poor rendition. In trying to be impressive they end up confusing everyone. The funny thing is everyone can see through the bluff. In reality those business cards are more about ego boosting than business sense.

They're compensations for lack of esteem. Emeka named the phenomenon "wanting to belong." More like "wanting to become" actually! Well there are a lot of Wanting to Becomes out there and he's not about to become one of them.



# Chapter Eight

*Relativity*

He kept meditating on the "simple" question, "What is my business?" He had hit a road block. His brain kept rebooting. He'd better stop before the system hangs. He put on the car radio and began to channel-surf using the controls on his steering wheel. "The trial of the accused in the gang rape of a 26-year old woman commences. No jail time for Police Pension Fund thief. Another corruption scandal rocks..." It was one disheartening news after another. "HOW-do-you-steal-pension funds?!" he asked his thoughts in exasperation. That's got to be one of the

most heartless things to do in life! And when brazen thieves get away with ridiculously light sentences surely honest endeavour is discouraged. He shook his head and switched off the car radio in contempt.

He completed the rest of the journey in the dark silent medium of the car.

---

"Morn!"... "Morn!"... "Morn!"... It was 7.45am. He was now at work. He put down his bag, dropped the car key on his desk, took his seat and switched on his system. As soon as the system booted, a message popped up on his screen: "Morning gorgeous! Remember me?" He looked around to see if anyone was watching, hoping to catch a trace of suspicion.

Stephen was on the phone, Anelka was studying a document, Femi was bent over her desk. Everyone looked busy. "Who's sending anonymous messages to my system?" It had no address or addresser. Just an addressee - him! He's cautious about launching an official investigation. For all he knew, a friend, or group of friends is pranking him.

He'll sort it out later. In the meanwhile it's 8.00am in Lagos, 7am in London, 2am in New York, 4pm in Tokyo. Four trillion dollars is moving round the globe. Money neither slumbers nor sleeps. There's always a need. There's always a business opportunity. Some are buying, some are selling. And with that, Don rolled up his sleeves and set to work. It's time to earn his pay.

The day went slowly. Very slowly. As he thought about it he realised why. It is the classic explanation of relativity. If you put your hand on a hot plate time will seem very slow. The pain makes it so. But if a young man spends time with a girl he loves, time will move fast. Too fast! He realised the day seemed slow because he was looking forward to the close of work. Five-Oh-One is Rasha time!

---

“What's up?”

“What do you mean, what's up?!”

“There's a glow on your face! What's up?”

Nike knows her too well, she thought. No need hiding things from her. They've been friends for ever. And she won't let up. Her legal training compounded that fact. She's been trying to hook her up with her

boyfriend's friends. She wasn't biting. They didn't seem right. She knows she likes Don. Might as well spill it out.

"Weell..."

"Well what? Spit it Rasha!" She squeezed her face, covered her eyes: "Don asked me out last night". She said it fast, in quick clip.

"He did?!"

"Just a casual date. Nothing serious."

"Sure! Especially judging by your outfit! Fi-na-lly!!" Rasha rolled her eyes: "We're just going for ice cream. And I'm sorry about your shoes!" She said the second half tentatively. "Shoes can wait! Promise you'll give me full gist tonight!" "Promise!...O, love you so much!" She got up to embrace Nike, leaning across the table. Nike hugged back, winked and sashayed away, exaggerating the gyration of her hips!



## Chapter Nine

*Fifteen minutes earlier*

An SMS came with a ping notation on Rasha's phone. It was Don. "Don't want to set tongues wagging at Ice Cream Factory. Can we change the venue to Chocolate Royale? 5.30?" \*Send\* "Totally understand. Kk." \*Send\* And so Don and Rasha decided on Chocolate Royale for their first date. A lot of colleagues frequent Ice Cream Factory hence the change of venue.

Don arrived 15mins earlier. Never polite to keep a lady waiting. It's a sign of devaluation. He walked to the terrace and took a seat at the far end. This gave him a

vantage view of arrivals. The waiter came with the menu but he deferred his order. "Expecting someone", he offered.

At 5.25pm Rasha arrived. She was heralded into Chocolate Royale with stares and admiration. Wise men with female company feigned a lack of notice. The unaccompanied followed the dictates of male genetic wiring. And so glances were stolen; visual decoys and opportunities created, to the consternation of one or two female companions.

As she stepped unto the terrace, Don looked up with a smile. He was excited but kept his cool and composure. She searched for him on the terrace with her eyes, looking around with a slight squint of pleasurable worry. And there he was waving at her! A smile broke up her squint. She

walked up to the table. She wore a deceptively simple looking black dress that's a bit hard to define. Imagine grabbing a free flowing bulbous knee length dress from the inside - three inches under the breast line - and then twisting. Call it a dress with a twist if you like; that's what Don thought! The artistry is that you see the twist but no twister. The obvious became unobvious. Rasha!

And it's not even so much about the dress. It's the way she wore it. Some dresses wear women. But some women wear dresses. Rasha wears dresses. Five inch high stilettos arranged her cadence in effortless biomorphic synchronicity. They lifted her above common feminine grace. And a fleshly apparition walked towards Don. "Hi!" she said happily. "Hi!" Don replied. He gave her a peck on either cheek and she

gladly accepted, bon vivantish! Every man on the terrace was unspokenly interested in who the lucky dude was! Not that it bothered Don. He took it all in with an attitudinal shrug. The envy felt good. Posing is a young man's prerogative.

She sat down, pulled an adjoining seat and settled her Prada bag on it. The waiter immediately re-appeared from nowhere. This time the smile was not from a training manual. It was obsequious. Nervous but genuine. "Good evening Madam!" and with that he gave them both the menus. As they scoured through the menu, a gentle breeze lifted a strand of Rasha's auburn hair. It wafted in carefree abandon, creating an ambient caress on Don's accelerated heart pace. Like an azygos anatomical part, she was oblivious to the effect she had on him. She takes her beauty matter-of-factly.

Wants to be appreciated as a person. Ironically it makes her even more attractive! Sierran light in complexion, a milky undertone pushes through the top membrane to give her Raphaelite shades of warmth and tan. God blessed some women! He felt comfortable with her. There's a maternal ambience she carries, a nurturing spirit. They placed an order for drinks, she strawberry smoothie, he mango smoothie. That done, she placed both hands face down on the table, arched her brow, cocked her face to a mock angle and exhaled, "So?!" "Well, here we are," Don replied. "...So tell me, what really happened that afternoon, at the office...? Why were you dancing and thanking me?" "Long story."

"I'm all yours!" He caught the double entendre - all ears, all yours! Delightful! He smiled and narrated all that's happened

since the stirrings began. He had her to thank for the breakthrough, he said.

He didn't know what to expect but well, he's poured it out. "Well..." she exhaled, "you'll need a vehicle for your dreams. You'll need to incorporate a company. I can help you there," she pouted. "I will put my legal training at your disposal. That would be my contribution."

He hadn't thought of that surprisingly. He needs a corporate vehicle. That mind map of his needs serious amendment. He began assembling the words in his mind - Demographics... Psychographic... Value Prop... He pulled a napkin, freed his pen and began to sketch... "And I believe the right words to say is... 'Thank you Miss Rasha!'" "I'm sorry... Thank you! Thank YOU! Just restructuring my thoughts.

"Can you see?" He drew four circles on the napkin. In one circle he wrote "Idea." In the next he wrote "Customer." In the third he wrote "Biz." In the last he wrote "Pro Services." She had no idea what he was talking about! But he looked adorable.

In his mind's eye he began to draw radiant bicycle spokes again. Need population. He folded the napkin, tucked it in his pocket, smiled at Rasha and said "Thank you," without words. It's so affirming when someone believes in you. He felt encouraged.



# Chapter Ten

*What's in a name?*

He decided to devote his weekend to sorting out his thoughts. The week was busy, very busy. He was literally subsumed in work. But there are so many loose threads in his business idea. So many thoughts dangling without resolution. He still hasn't populated the four circles he drew on the paper napkin at Chocolate Royal... Idea, Customer, Pro. Services, Biz... And then there's Rasha. What's next? These thoughts were raging in his head at 5.35 in the morning. He decided to go for a walk to clear his head. Early morning walk.

Oxygenated fresh air. No smoke. No smog. No cars. Just earth, sky and thoughts. He slipped on his track suit trousers, put on a t-shirt and wore his sneakers. Then he hit the road. He took Johnson Street, walking at a brisk pace. The pace matched his resolve. First he must sort out his business definition.

He needs to be definitive. Non specificity confuses the market...makes them tentative... Now, is it Laundromat? Well that's popular in the US but it addresses a different cultural need. Laundromat is for environments with self-help culture. His business environment is the opposite. It has a help culture. That's why every household seems to have a help of some sort. You can't just transplant a business model. If the culture of the market is opposed to your business idea the business

will fail.

Seems all his attempts at direct definition aren't working. What if he changes tack? What if he defines the business by generating a statement of intention? That could work. There are many ways to skin a cat. An early morning jogger ran past him. He continued at his pace. "We will undertake laundry services for professionals in busy jobs who are time poor. We will provide laundry services for professionals who hate doing laundry." That's easier! Just might work. The operative words in the two statements are "laundry" and "professionals." Essentially, it is laundry for time poor professionals and laundry hating professionals. These are the market. Or could he say "professional laundry services for busy and disinclined professionals?" Too long, too convoluted.

How about professional laundry services for professionals by professionals? Hmn, pro laundry service for pros by pros!

He's on Abimbola Raphael Street now. He slowed down his pace. Pro laundry by pros. Sounds interesting. He could even name the company from this definition: PRO LAUNDRY! He can just see the signboard: "PRO LAUNDRY." White background. It began to grow on him: PRO LAUNDRY ...Laundry for pros by pros. He stopped walking, right in the middle of the street. He wrote out the name in the air: put out his hands as if hanging a signboard: PRO LAUNDRY. But having been stimulated other ideas began to flood in: Laundry Masters... Business Class Laundry... Laundry Place... Ironing Board... Washing Machine... Washing Professionals... Baba Laundry... He didn't junk the ideas.

He chose to examine them one by one (Thoroughness Don, thoroughness).

“Baba Laundry” may open him up to litigation, especially considering a Baba used to do his laundry. Is that passing off? “Laundry Masters” is good. “Masters” replaces “Professionals” in concept. Suggests technical competence. “Business Class Laundry” sounds like a service to businessmen only, like an exclusive laundry. But maybe not... higher offering? “Laundry Place” is not bad except that it suggests a self help service. “Ironing Board” sounds like an ironing business without washing. “Washing Machine” feels like laundry services without ironing!

“Washing Professionals” is too generic. Can be any type of washing... Washing plates? Floors? Seems like the strongest names are

"Pro Laundry" and "Laundry Masters." But, how about "Laundry Pro". "Pro Laundry" emphasises the TYPE of WASHING. Laundry Pro emphasises the type of WASHERS. He could also have "Laundry4Pros" but that's too casual isn't it? He'll need to consult on this name thing. And on the business definition as well. Always wise to seek counsel.

He'll ask Rasha what she thinks. And others as well... In a multitude of counsel is wisdom, his mum used to say. He's learnt something though: the proper framing of questions can solve difficult problems. And one shouldn't toss out ideas unexamined. Creativity is a relay journey. One thought triggers another. He digested the insights and turned to resume his morning walk. Only now he faced the direction of his house!



## Chapter Eleven

*Rims and spokes*

It was 7am on Sunday. Don had been up since 6am, his body having made a slight adjustment for the weekend. Otherwise he'll have been up from 5am. He sat on his bed and surveyed his madness and his luck. Both exist side by side. He has the good fortune of a well paying job; yet he's contemplating leaving it for the uncertainty of entrepreneurship. Madness. And then there's Rasha. The more he knew of her the luckier he felt. Luck.

He got up from the bed and padded to the next room - doubles as his den. On the

table was the napkin from Chocolate Royal. On it were the crude scribbles of his thought - stirrings of a new mind map. The old had passed away. All things became new. He sat at his desk, opened his notebook, took a pen and began to reproduce the four circles from the serviette. In one circle he wrote "Idea." In the second circle he wrote "Customer."

In the third he wrote "Biz" and in the fourth he wrote "Pro Services." He realised from his first date with Rasha that he needs professional services. He drew radiant spokes from the Professional Services circle, turning it into bicycle rim. On one spoke he wrote "Legal". (In brackets, he wrote Rasha against it). On another he wrote "Accounting." He'll need to set up his books, his accounts.

On the next spoke he wrote "Branding." And the next he wrote "Architecture." Then he drew another spoke and put a question mark against it. You never know what you'll need next. Oh, how about staffing? He'll need help with that too. He drew another spoke and wrote "HR" (Human Resources). And IT! He added "IT" as a spoke. The diagram looked like this:

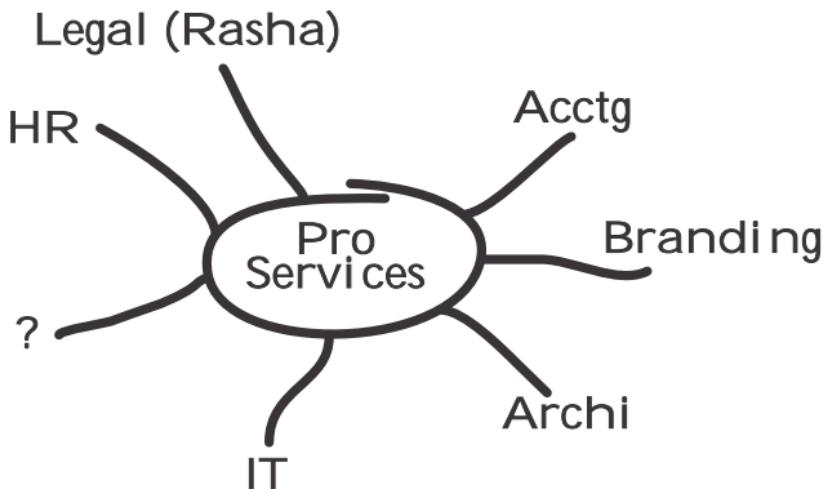


Fig.2

He picked the next circle, the one with "Customer" and drew radiant bicycle spokes. This was easier. He just transferred the notations from his old mind map: "Demographics, Psychographics, Value Proposition, Price (tolerance) Range..." He added an extra spoke with a question mark. This is the diagram:

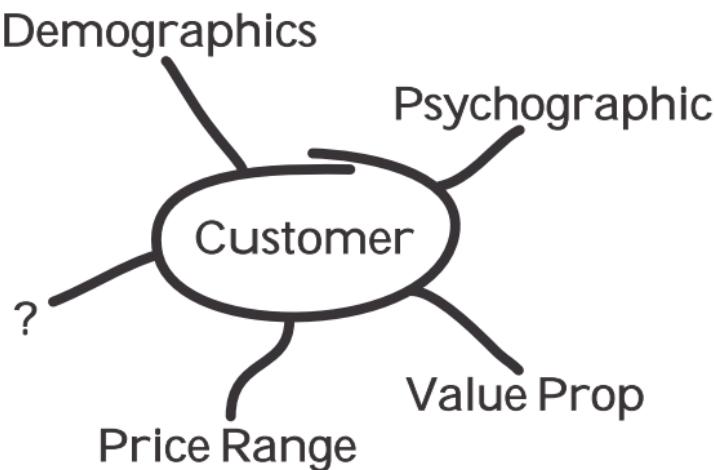


Fig.3

Then he picked the circle with "Biz" in it. He drew spokes from it and began to write against the spokes. (This was also fairly

easy. He just transferred). On one spoke he wrote "HR". On another he wrote "Finance." And then "Location", then "Equipment." Then "Marketing" And "Competition." He added an extra spoke with a question mark. You never know!

This is the diagram:

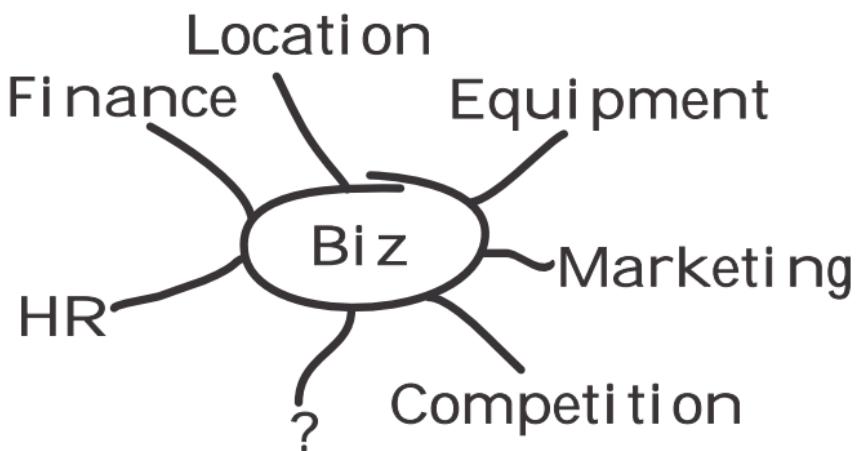


Fig.4

Then he picked the last circle, the one with "Idea." He drew spokes out, and began to think and write. On one spoke he wrote "Concept". On another he wrote "Name!"

He added an exclamation to celebrate his progress on that front. Then he began to think. Where's this thing going, he asked himself. How large do I see it becoming? Assuming I had resources to grow the business, what can it become? He smiled at the possibilities and scribbled "Vision" against the third spoke. Hmn! He put his hand over his mouth and scratched his brain again: What role do I want in the customer's life? What do I really want to do for him? What's my mission? He quickly removed his hand from his mouth and wrote "Mission." He rubbed his left eye in a non-linear pattern and thought again: I'm going to be bringing all sorts of people together. There has to be a set of unifiers - a simple set of codes to regulate actions, but not a "Ten Commandments" type of thing. Suppose I can appeal to the heart of the

people, get them to subscribe to a set of values. Very useful, even advisable in a competitive system. Bancorp International has a list of such values but in all honesty he never understood the need for them until now. These values will invariably determine the business lifestyle, the way of thinking and relating... Culture! They'll determine how customers are treated, the staff to staff relationship and so much more. He put pen to paper and wrote "Values" on the next spoke. Then he added "Culture." This is what he produced:

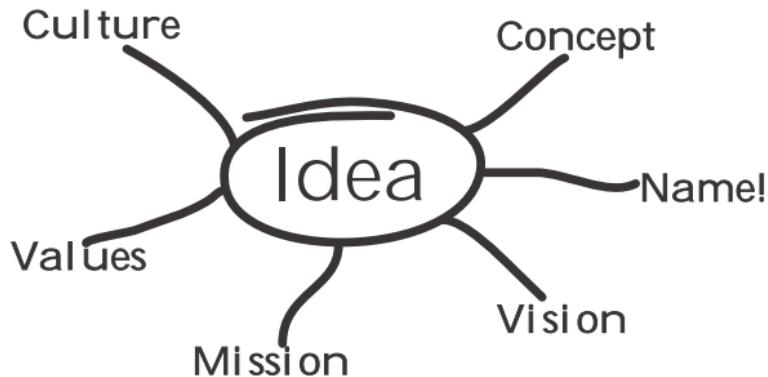


Fig.5

But are these not too much of heavy stuff for a small business, he asked himself. Not if he wants to succeed, he replied himself. What is good for Bancorp International is good for Pro Laundry; or is it Laundry Pro or Laundry Masters? I'll soon resolve the name stuff, he said in his head. Boy, it takes a lot to conceptualise a business! Without thorough thinking one is bound to fail. No wonder SME failure rate is high! By some account only one in twenty succeed.

He put down his pen, and got up to take his bath. He's expecting Mark Amaza, Simeon Borokini, Funlola and Bola. Together, they'll watch Nigeria take on Burkina Faso in the African Cup of Nations finals. An interesting day lies ahead!

\*Thirteen hours later Nigeria pips Burkina Faso 1-0!



## Chapter Twelve

*A little extra*

It was the morning after. The streets were recovering from the African Nations Cup finals like alcoholics on the way home from an inebriation contest. The street cleaners were earning their pay. Expired memorials of gaiety littered the streets - bottles of beer. Don arrived at work, to an office block in a celebratory mood. Clusters of staff here and there bunched and huddled in conversation, like a surfeit of African egusi soup. Better yet, like a bean cake puree coagulation sizzling in a hot sea of palm oil. The floor was abuzz with game analysis. Even the women were not left out. Osayi

Alile, Funmi Fatona and Tsema Okoye animatedly analysed the last hypertensive moments of the game in soprano. Who'll believe they weren't at the stadium!

One of the women apparently brought celebratory cakes. The package read I Desserts™. That's Peju's company isn't it? And is that Lolade in the far corner?

What's she doing on this floor! And Deleks?! Chalya Miri-Gahzi? Football! Such a powerful gravitational force. If only the country can get it right in other departments. He settled down at his desk and ran along with the day as it struggled to accommodate human dimensions.

At break he went to the 3rd floor cafeteria. It was packed full with excitement. He ordered his meal and settled down with

Rasha. Bits and pieces of conversation - vocal alphabet - floated around them. "Which would you rather choose? Pro Laundry, Laundry Pro or Laundry Masters?" he asked. "How about we do mini-mini-mani-mo!" she said with a smile. "Come on!" "Ok!" She pursed her lips and considered for a moment... "Well one is a description of capability..." "That's Pro Laundry?" at which she nodded. "The second is actually funky. Describes a calling." "Laundry Pro?" and she nodded. "The third is too generic, but interesting and assertive." "So you think Laundry Masters is too generic?"

"My take is that anyone can set up that business, but not you!"

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't the business laundry services for professionals?"

“Yep. Get to the point.”

“Well, there will be expectations, from this crowd at least (she pointed to her colleagues)... And they represent your market... They expect that if you (Don) go into what is basically a "mundane" business (pardon my expression), there's something special you'll bring to it! They expect you to leave your mark on it. And you want a name that'll appeal to your market. I'm afraid 'Laundry Masters' isn't it! Doesn't cut it for me! Not egalitarian enough for your market, I'm afraid. You know, I have a friend... a graphic designer. Her mother's friend wanted her to design her business card. The only problem was, she minded a small grocery shop at Ogba - a basic victuals shop. Obviously nothing corporate. But she wanted my friend to design her business card. Anyway, Folakemi designed

the business card. She printed 300 copies and gave her as a gift. Well, the woman came by the next day to give a testimonial. (You know that generation!) "You know what my friends told me?" she said. "They said there's education in my business card! Edu-ca-tion!" She went to Folakemi for design for a reason. And her expectations were fulfilled judging by the feedback. Folakemi gave her boasting rights. Her card was different!

This market wants boasting rights. The laundry must be a brand they'll want to associate with. And it starts with the name. Well, she didn't know it, but she had hit a button on Don's mind map - the "idea" circle. If you recall one of the spokes is "Psychographics". She just hit that button. It is important to take into cognisance the psyche and lifestyle of the customer.

Demographics won't give those details. It's just basic info. It occurred to him that his laundry business must affirm the beliefs of his target market about themselves. He must distinguish his customers with his laundry brand. They'll want that. They want a "pose factor". The pricing must reflect their psychology as well. His pricing won't be based on cost analysis. He'll raise it a little to make the customer feel he's getting worth. But not too high lest the product becomes psychologically out of reach even though it's economically within reach. But there must be value for the extra charge. It's Economics 101 all over, he thought. He needs to explore the fundamental assumptions of the demand and supply curve. That's where she's pointing him. He smiled at her and she smiled back.

The subject changed and wound it's way back to Sunday's match. In the corner of the cafeteria, Femi was staring at them. And her eyes were filled with daggers!



## Chapter Thirteen

*Organiser*

He ruminated over his lunch time conversation with Rasha. There are two levels of expectation he has to meet: the customers' expectations of the business and then the expectations of his colleagues about the brand. Those colleagues represent the target market. Therefore, the market has some brand expectations. This on top of those other general expectations from the laundry business. There are some basic functional stuff the customer expects. He brought out his notebook and began to diarise his thoughts. Someday this notebook will become the stuff of legend.

He smiled at the thought of that. He can imagine the notebook in the corporate museum. That brought a warm glow to his heart. One day he'll get to tell his story...

Don't get ahead of yourself Don! He brought himself back to Earth from his rapturous revelry. Okay, two levels of expectations (He wrote a header - "CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS"):

a) He expects clean clothes, done very well. b) He doesn't expect his clothes to go missing. He expects his clothes back. c) He doesn't expect his clothes torn or ragged. (He wrote that last bit from his experience with Baba, his sacked laundry man). O, yes, customers want courtesy.

They don't pay to be disrespected. He put pen to paper and wrote: d). "He expects courtesy." And of course timeliness. And that became e) "He expects timeliness."

So, clean clothes, well ironed too! Safety. Good clothe condition. Courtesy. Timeliness. These are the five basic expectations of the customer. Maybe he should convert one or two to Values. Courtesy sounds like a business value. And so does timeliness. The two must be imbibed by all staff. Yes, the staff must be trained on how to handle clothes in order to avoid a Baba the washerman creation. But on top of that training must be training on values. It thus occurred to him that values are not just feel good factors, or "moral" components, or

mere postings on a website! They're important factors in the successful running of a business - some sort of business guidance system.

God, one must avoid the danger of "appearances" - writing out things like values and vision statement just to appear "corporate"! They must be actionalised for success and one must believe in them. He quickly flicked another page and wrote "VALUES." He underlined it twice, as if for emphasis. Then he wrote:

- a) Courtesy
- b) Timeliness
- c) ???

But what does he do with the other expectations of the customer? They ought

to be inserted into the business somehow. What if he converts them to promises? That sounds interesting. He can promise his customers certain things. He began to write:

- a) We shall handle our customers' clothes with utmost care
- b) We shall deliver our laundry service with timeliness
- c) We shall treat our customers with courtesy and give them respect

Almost sounds like a communist manifesto in a capitalist venture! Irony. He wrote "PROMISES/BUSINESS MANIFESTO" as header. So now he has two values and three promises.

If the promises must hold he must put in place structures and processes to deliver on them. There must be efficiency. Oh, that can also be a value! He cancelled the question marks and wrote "Efficiency." So now he has three values: courtesy, timeliness and efficiency. The first two are customer oriented. The third, efficiency, is business operation oriented. Helps deliver the promises.

He clapped for himself! It's taking shape! The dream is taking on form. But something kept irritating the back of his brain...like a grain of sand shaped like letter "F." F... Feb... Feb/Rasha?

Then it hit him! Of course February and Rasha! Oh, no! Of course! Valentine! O my God, tomorrow is February 14! How could he forget? Entrepreneurs' emotional syn-

drome already? O my! What can he do? He's got to impress her. First Valentine?! He spent some time thinking, and then got up and headed for the 7th floor.

"Knock knock!" Osayi looked up from her desk and broke out in a smile. "Hi!"

"Hi!"

"Didn't know you love football!"

"Didn't know too! But what do we know about ourselves? What brings you here?"

Osayi strikes him as a balanced individual, level headed. Quiet in places and energy controlled, he suspects chatty animatedness among her women folk. She's definitely a creature of habit. Loves consistency and truth. She's smart and intelligent but has a simple belief system. The problem comes when that faith is shattered.

Her inside is compartmentalised. That's her coping mechanism. One thing about her though is her sense of loyalty. She has friends as crazy as they come and she stands by them.

"I need your help on something..." Don began. She sensed what it was all about and a mischievous grin appeared on her face. This is the kind of thing she loves: an opportunity to help mixed with mischief. Osayi is nothing if not an "organiser." He told her what he had in mind and Osayi broke out in broader smile! She placed a call to Rasha. "Hello!"

"Hi Rash!"

"What's up?"

"Not very good news I'm afraid. TA just mandated the two of us to take the International Director, Finance, out for dinner tomorrow!"

"What?! That's Valentine day!" At this Osayi struggled to hold her laughter in; covered her mouth! She returned to poker face: "He's travelling back Friday." Rasha rubbed her eye and brow, and put down the phone.



# Chapter Fourteen

*Mr. Valentinus*

5am, February 14. The thought of her captivated his senses, holding them prisoner for ransom. He couldn't get past her. His thoughts kept looping, like a scratched vinyl record. Her voice, those eyes, the smile... He couldn't-get-past-her! He remembered the first night he saw her. There she was sitting pretty in a floral print dress. Her perfume sat with her. Tom Ford Old Wood. It sat on the bench next to her, clinging to her like a dear old friend. A scintillating allure, it often goeth before her - her heraldic John the Baptist. With unassuming modesty, the woody under-

tone is an indefinable essence. And it follows her like a mist of grace. In the ambient light of his bedroom his thoughts spoke... whispering... He floated in a warm vat of liquefied honey... brown and rolling like the sea, gentle and disorienting... An intangible reality, a blend of linseed in an artist's palette of vision. He was losing control. He had appetite for none but her. Not earthly food. Not the food of mortals. And if so be, love is the food of the gods - a delicacy of the immortals.

He smiled at the smoky temperament of her eyelids. Gothic, infernal, yet saintly. Her eyes lay hid, behind the dark shadows, a velvet mascara curtain parting hither thither. Her soft laughter bounded into the room, like a young lamb foraging on the greens of Hodder Valley. His heart raced, past memories of immediate events.

Her dimpled smile - a tenderiser and softner of the harsh realities of life and its Anselm Kiefer corrugatedness. With a stroke of her smile, she takes the crudity and torment out of life's brutalised hue. He longs to see her, speak with her, hear her voice... On the occasion of the passion of the man Valentinus who died on February 14, on Via Flaminia in the north of Rome, Don fell in love. And one kilometer south-west of his residence as the crow flies, Venus stirred from sleep.

Like an epicurean goddess she hungered for him, needed him. Her hair was tussled lugubriously on the downs, her right arm comforting her face, her pillow comforting the comforter. She thought about him all night...his tenderness, his little acts of kindness... The ice cream smudge on his nose at Cold Stone, the peeling laugh at

Vergnano, his intellect and allure, so intense, so sincere. His boyish charm captivated her.

She knew in a way that only a woman can know that he's the one for her. Her heart was longing... Where are you Don?! Just then her phone pinged. A rash of emoticons flooded her screen: heart, flowers, kisses of various hues and shades. It was Don! Just when she asked of him! She took that as a sign. Her phone pinged again.

And the words came: O'er the ocean /o'er the waves / My heart doth paddle / My princess I seek! / Were I king / my kingdom, divide / Were I mighty / the moon I'll pluck / Were I wealthy / the world to buy/ All for my princess! / O fair damsel / be thou merciful / In the tenderness of thy bosom / grant me /

I pray / That this day / thou considereth my lonesome heart / I pray thee / be thou my Val! / If thou grant my request / thou shalt have fulfilled / a gracious act of love / and someday / when my dreams come to become / I shall with diligence / remember thy graciousness / to a soul famished / Sealed: The Knight of Lagoshire.

Her joy knew no bounds. A tear welled up in her eye. She wiped it with her left hand. Oh Don! She looked at her phone and began to type: O lonesome heart / With the pleasure of my heart / Grant I thy quest / It is my joy, and honour / to so grant thee / O knight in armour / I am thy Val!

She arrived at the office to the reception of a bouquet of red roses. The card was signed, THE KNIGHT! She sent a text to him: "Thank you for my roses!" "You're

welcome, Princess!" An hour later, another bouquet arrived - white roses this time. "What are you doing?!" \*Send.\* "White rose is a sign of purity. An ode to your pure heart, my lilly lady!" \*Send.\* An hour after, lavender roses arrived. "Mr. Don!!!" \*Send.\* "Yes! Lavender stands for falling in love at first sight. I rest my case." \*Send.\* By this time pandemonium had broken out on her floor. "Who's this guy, Rasha?! Who's 'The Knight'?" She just smiled, shook her head, slowly, and basked in adoration.

At 12noon, a courier arrived with two packages and an envelope. The packages were ensconced in lovely purple velvet wrapping paper. Inside the first package was a Tom Ford Black Orchid perfume. Oh! She unwrapped the second to reveal a brown box... A box of decadent chocolate - Z Choclat - created by Pascal Caffet, World

Champion Chocolatier. The card was a special invite to dinner with "Mr. Knight" - International Director, Finance, Bancorp International! She burst out in laughter remembering yesterday's call from Osayi! Apparently a prank! "I'm going to kill Don and Osayi for this!" And Valentine will never be the same again, for her.



## Chapter Fifteen

*No orphan allowed*

It was the day after. Valentine was losing its potency. As the hours progressed its energy wound down, until it gave up the ghost. The harsh realities of life's daily ablutions would do that to any passion of man. The traffic in the city, the frayed nerves of drivers...all the noise, the pollution...all became realities. The dinner with Rasha went very well. So well indeed that in high spirit his soul did a jigaboo, acrobating. Now Valentine is gone, it's time to go back to realism. And time to put more thought hours into the laundry business incubating. He ran over his last conversation with

Rasha. Two levels of expectation were established. The first is the general expectation of customers: good service, courtesy, safety of articles, timeliness... The second needs further thought.

It seems well advised of the brain however to do some verification on the proposed names before more ado. The sensible and least expensive starting point is of course the internet. He'll ask his lawyer (\*smile\*) to search the Company Registry for name availability later.

But first he must do his part. He'll need to register whatever name he chooses as domain address for his website and for email addresses. Some people would of course opt for a yahoo.com or hotmail.com extension, but not him. They don't depict seriousness for a corporation.

They won't inspire trust. Somehow they don't connote the existence of business structure. He needs for people to see the business in a particular manner. He needs to demonstrate "corporate" thinking and permanence. Funny how a little investment of less than \$40 can determine the image and prospects of a new business venture. He googled "Laundrymasters.com". The name came up for sale. Was pre-registered by some entity called "Alkober". Contact details for bidding were made available. Perhaps to avoid paying Alkober, another laundry company in the UK opted for laundrymaster.co.uk without the "s" in "masters".

His field was narrowing it seems. He then googled "Laundrypro.com". Well it had been pre-registered too, by Domain-brokers.com.

He tried googling "Prolaundry.com" but the internet connection failed. Signal was weak. One bar. Tried again. Same result. But from the look of things so far, seems the web address will cost him more than envisaged. Well, he hasn't written his business plan yet. Always better to do research before writing a business plan. This name thing is obviously important. Rasha somehow tied expectations about him to the naming of the business. The more he thought about these expectations, the more he realised they had something to do with "packaging." That's branding, isn't it? Well, that branding must have a foundation.

In his mind's eye he saw a 2-storey building with a foundation. The foundation is the business idea, and all its dimensions - vision, mission, concept, values, culture... The ground floor relates to structure and

processes necessary to deliver on the definition and promises of the business. The first floor is the branding. He drew this diagram:

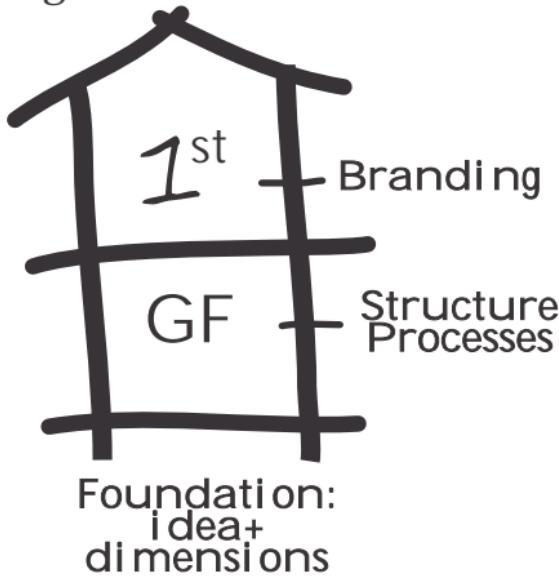


Fig.6

He took another look at his drawing and determined it followed a simple logic. Without a well thought out idea (foundation), the business staffing, processes and service will be faulty. A misalignment of business structures and

processes with concept will obviously create a problem. (At this thought he saw cracks appear on the illustrative building...) And obviously without sound business admin the branding cannot hold.

Branding cannot be an orphan. He turned the page in his notebook and began to write his new insight:

- a) You cannot build something on nothing
- b) Business structure and processes must align with concept
- c) Branding is not an orphan
- d) Without a sound business admin branding will fail

He looked at the page once more. Makes

sense! He turned his face on its pivot and gazed off into the distance, of nowhere.



## Chapter Sixteen

*Foraging for heaviness*

He woke up that morning feeling strangely lethargic. It was as if the weight of the world descended on him. He felt like Atlas without his strength. He searched himself to locate the source of discontent. Yes, he wasn't particularly buoyant but that wasn't it. Salaries would be paid in a week, and in any case he had savings. It wasn't money. He kept foraging, even enroute work. Finding nothing, anxiety mixed with sadness to create a mild cocktail of depression. Save for the errant yellow cab driver with facial striations worthy of the claws of a hyena, his journey to work was

uneventful. He dumped his bag, plumped himself at his desk, and sat, slumped, legs apart, tie loose.

Five minutes into the morning, Valerie dumped a thin file on his desk; said something about web copy. He wasn't really listening but nodded in assent. He just felt beat. He put on his system and there it was again. From Anonymous. "She's not good for you!" the message read.

It's been going on a while now. He thought he could ignore it but apparently not. Whoever sends these messages knows about his relationship with Rasha. Clearly monitoring. He had thought Mustapha was pranking him. It's the kind of thing he does but he's having second thoughts now. He got up from his desk and went to see Jazmin. She's got an ear to the ground. But

she wasn't on seat. He thought a bit and took the flight down to Anietie Esema. He used to be in IT. He told him about the pop up messages without elaborating. Anietie placed a call to Oyeseye. Oyeseye has friends everywhere. "Tell him to meet me in front of SkunkWorks elevators." SkunkWorks is the unofficial designation of the IT dept.

They got to the 9th floor about the same time. As they came out of the elevator, they saw Femi chattily engaging Kola just outside the SkunkWorks doors. They seemed familiar. Her hand rested on his shoulder as she laughed, uproariously. He was unusually animated, his grin as wide as a cable dish. Oyeseye and Don exchanged glances. Who'll have thought?! Femi walked away tossing a dramatic "Hi!" their way but secretly lobbed a facial grenade at

Oyeseye. She was nonplused. They walked through the doors and she marched straight for the desk of Seye with Don in tow. As soon as they left, Collins placed a call to Femi.

---

Still the day weighed on his spirit. Having rummaged the compartments of his heart unsuccessfully, he began a search of secret closets. Femi came over to his desk. "You don't look too cheerful today Don. Why? Come let me buy you Coca-Cola!" "Not today Femi. Just sorting out stuff in my head." She climbed his desk, sat on it facing him, narrowing his private space, her taut skirt riding up her thighs an inch or two. He was a bit embarrassed but she pretended not to notice. "You know you work too hard, Don! Chill!" He didn't know what to make

of the situation. They had always gotten along, close in some ways but this is... erm...closer! She knew perfectly the effect she was creating. He squirmed, stylishly. Moved. She moved as well, closed the space, a bit more, nonchalantly. Don was confused. Thought he just witnessed something affirmative upstairs - she with Kola. Anyway, everyone knows Femi flirts. At this he relaxed. Out of the corner of her eye Femi saw Rasha walk on to the floor. Her laughter went up and she flicked nothing from Don's hair. Rasha stopped in her track, took in the scene in one second, turned her back and rode the elevator back to the 5th floor. Don never saw her. At Rasha's departure Femi got up from his desk and went back to her desk.

In truth he felt a little lighter, but fifteen minutes later the heaviness returned. It

took him up till 10 that night to realise what was dragging him down. It was the weight of his proposed undertaking. He was subconsciously aware of the implications of his impending entrepreneurial venture but consciously unaware of his awareness. Such depressive state is not uncommon with aspiring entrepreneurs. It's actually fear. Fear of risk. Fear of venture. Fear of failure. Fear of the unknown. Fear of loss of security. Fear of loss of social status. Fear of tomorrow. Fear of what-if-it-doesn't-work-out... Fear of fear. These are entrepreneurial fears. Pretty common. Pretty subterranean. But Don didn't know. Didn't even realise what he was experiencing! That will come later. Entrepreneurs face these fears every once every while. Entrepreneurship entails risk. With risk comes fear. So lost was Don in his

depressed state that he neither saw Rasha's call, nor her text.



# Chapter Seventeen

*Going for a drink*

"Stay away from her!" "Who?" "Your new love interest!" "My new love interest? Who?!" "Femi!" "Femi?... New love interest?! How?!" He quickly mandated his mind to begin to question itself, search for facts, look for clues... Couldn't understand! His mind raced down timelines with a reverse propellant. He could almost hear the tape rewind at 5x speed: Wokeupat5am-cantrememberwhathappenednextoyesifelt verydowndidntunderstanditasidontunder standnowwasatoughdaymessageonmyter minalconsultedtoniatogothersawfemicolli nsfemicametomydeskfemicametomydesks

he was flirtatious...

"I saw you with her."

"You-saw-us?!"

"I came up to see you during lunch break.

Saw her with you and turned back!"

"Rasha! Why didn't you just come up!"

"Two's a company. Three's a political rally I guess. Both of you seemed to be doing just fine!"

"Rasha!"

"She offered to take me out for a drink!"

"And did you go?!"

"No. Of course not!"

"She wants more than a drink."

"Come on Rasha! She can be flirtatious but everyone knows that about her."

"Why are men so blind?! I'm a woman and I can tell you she wants more than a drink! And she's dangerous!"

"Well, this camel ain't drinking! There's only one woman for me. Her name is Rasha

by the way!

"Come on, you just wanted to hear that didn't you? I love you and I want no one else! Besides, it's an unfair competition. Yes, she's pretty..."

"She is?!"

"No, I was just... Erm...about to say erm...she's pretty focused on her job!" At this she burst out laughing. She had been soaking in the toast, pretend-quarelling and pouting. "Well, I called to ask if you've settled on a name? Want to do a search at the Company Registry. It's a prelude to your registration and I need to know what name you settled on." That's true, but not exactly true. Yes she's planning to commence the registration process. But no lawyer calls at 6.30 in the morning except to collect on a bill. She wanted to clear the Femi thing.

She knows there's nothing going on. But what did Obama say? Out of an abundance of caution! Don may be well intended but she knows what she saw. A woman knows instinctively, and ain't no woman taking her man! She laughed at herself, secretly delighted though.

"I'll see you at work then!"

"We'll see at work."

"Why don't you and I go for a drink this evening! It's Friday you know!" She was going to make excuses... She had a girls' night out. She, Amina, Chinasa, Anita, Gbemi Leigh, Victoria, Osolake and of course Nike...taking the night on! Osolake is the life of the party! She has the latest gist on everything! Gbemi Leigh is the sister to everyone. Everyone calls Anita, Mo! She's particular about spell check. Amina models part time... Chinasa is relatively quiet.

But she lurves Victoria Beckham! She's not been out with them for some time; and they're already complaining. Don is monopolising her time and affection they said. But then she saw Femi's taut skirt again - the one that rode up, exposing naked thighs. She changed her mind immediately! She's going with her man!

"Were you planning to take up Femi's offer for a drink?"

"Rasha!"

"What?!"

"See you after work!"

He switched off the phone and smiled! He had actually decided on a name - Laundry Pro. It segments his market in so many ways. And it says a lot. The guys in the office will want to associate with such a name. Because it's culturally elevated it will

no doubt cut off some of the market, but not his target market. He can't service everyone. A business must be targeted at a particular market, he reasoned. Otherwise he risks brand dilution. The brand won't be well defined. Better to own a market. More financially efficient. Of course it doesn't mean he'll turn back walk-in customers. They're welcome! Some will come out of curiosity. But he must position the business in such a manner that it's a cultural fit for his target market. He's going after the young urban professional, male or female.

Perhaps he'll play certain types of music... jazz! Jazz playing in a laundry service reception? Now that's something new! He must move the laundry away from functional definition. You know, that machinist no frills, no soul look and feel... He'll move away from that. The guys and

ladies will be coming in themselves. They need to feel at “home.” He'll create a “pose factor” for them! Laundry Pro must be a place of fortuitous accidental encounters, a cultural melting spot. The kind of place you don't mind hanging out for 30, 45 minutes, even one hour.

What if he attaches a barbing salon, you know, for old fashioned shave... Real blade... He can see it. Professional barbers with aprons; 50's barber's chair...like Dolce & Gabanna did at their atelier near Lake Como. It all began to come together, in his head. He won't aim for the high end of the market. They mainly go for dry cleaning and they have domestic personnel. They'll never come to a laundry. They'll consider it demeaning. They'll send a driver or domestic personnel. They have money but

they're not his target market. Which is the point of not using only demographics to determine target market. Not enough. Psychographics is key.

As he thought over these things, he realised he was again back to Economics 101. These are explorations of the four assumption underguarding the law of demand and supply. Nike Corp has been exploiting it for decades... What! 7:15! He's going to be late! Time to go!



## Chapter Eighteen

*Windfall*

He gave three names to Rasha in order of preference: LAUNDRY PRO, LAUNDRY MASTERS, PRO LAUNDRY. She'll make a search on the availability of the names before proceeding to register the company. It is only after confirmation of name availability that she can submit the necessary documents.

---

She drafted the Articles and Memorandum of Incorporation. It essentially documents in detail the purpose of the company, the

powers of the company and the ownership of the company. He chose as directors his mum and two sisters, along with himself. He had wanted to include Rasha but she declined. Will be considered presumptuous in some quarters. She hadn't even met his mum, or sisters. They'll need to sign the documents and surely they'll wonder who Rasha Denton is. She would! She's not investing any money though he had suggested she take equity in exchange for her services. Moreover she's playing the role of company secretary, at least to save him initial costs, until he formally appoints one. He couldn't decide on the share structure yet.

He didn't really know how much his take off capital would be. She had an idea on moving things forward before share allocation. She called Oluyemisi Falaye to

confirm practice trend. Was her classmate in law school. Lovely young lady, her father used to say. Down to earth. Nice. Good lawyer. She must arrange a lovely match for her. At this she laughed at herself. Sounding like her mum! They both agreed Don should allocate nominal shares to get the incorporation going. The paid-up capital share structuring can come later. This allows for fast tracking of registration and securing of name. He'll just pay for amendment later, along with other stipulated fees. Well, Dad would have said the man who waits for perfect conditions never gets anything done! Oh, she misses her dad. He would have loved Don!

---

Bashorun Dele Momodu is an enigma if e'er was one. Popularly called "Chief", he's

jocular, avuncular, colourful, unashamedly loud (for a purpose he says), affable and peripatetic. His middle name should be "air-miles". He can cover London, Lagos, Accra, Paris, New York, Jo'burg and even Kabul in one day! Loyal to memories, and kind, he'll go to the ends of the earth for his friends.

A visit to his house at the oddest hour will yield a rich gastro-social experimentation from his well appointed kitchen. His equally well appointed chef of remarkable gait seems to consume half the throughput. He competes with Chief in gait. And Chief will regal you with stories that create fluid dynamics for gravitationally oriented culinary output down the oesophagus. Don wanted to confer with Chief. He had always been a good friend of the family, and remained so after his father's death. He still

comes by the house; it's always a full court when Chief shows up. There is the tale of fourteen mobile phones. Chief carries fourteen mobile phones and international border agencies are always curious!

"Chief, I think I'm going bonkers!"

"Bonkers ke?!" Chief replied, and followed with an efficacious African proverb of the complicated variety! In essence, madness is an abomination to those under the protection of the gods! (Chief is full of proverbs - one for every three paragraphs of conversation!) Don narrated the march of his entrepreneurial spark to Chief. He's not been able to tell his mum he said.

Chief and Don come from disparate backgrounds. Strangely they're close. Chief treats him like a son. He calls Don "Ajebo." Roughly translated, it means Don is from

the posh end of town; that he's been cocooned against the harsh realities of life: inoculated at birth against hardship. But Chief was impressed. Here's a young lad born of privilege yet determined to make a mark in life and chart his own course. Not surprising there. He's an Elliott. The *agbalumo* cannot discredit its ancestors. It must be pregnant with seed.

“My dear young man, you're not crazy! And if you are, this is the type of craziness we pray for our children! I know you have a good job but like I always tell you, follow your heart! Things will become clearer as you go along. But you will pay a price. Ambition has a price my dear! Everything great comes with a price tag. You will face challenges. Challenges! Hmn! You will face discouragement. But I will encourage your madness. I'm going to give you \$60,000. It

is my seed grant towards this insanity of yours. Your father, bless his memory, was exceedingly good to me. Ah, *been'i!* He was a good man!" Tears welled up in Chief's eyes: "In those dark days he stood by me! Ah, he stood by me! God bless his memory!" Don was shocked to say the least. He didn't know what to say and Chief would not tolerate effusive thankfulness. As he left, the Chief said to himself, "Unfortunately many young men don't realise character is collateral and credit facility. Some are too smart for their own good. Always looking for fast money! Don't want to build! Hustle, without character!" He sent a parting shot after him: "Don't share your dream with everyone o! People are wicked, and envious!" Chief sat back, thinking: The boy is well bred! He has the viscous temperament of a well pounded bowl of yam! Hmn! *Omo're bi'yan!*



# Chapter Nineteen

*Financing a dream*

The outcome of the meeting with Bashorun Dele Momodu was a complete surprise to him. That wasn't what he was expecting. Not by any stretch of imagination. Not \$60,000! The Chief must really believe in him. And he backed it up with his money. He's not even sure he has that kind of faith in himself. (Increase your faith Don!) Chief's commitment drew the line in the sand. Laundry Pro is now a commitment. In the words of Chief, the secretly impregnated maiden must give birth in the open market. He knows people like Chief are rare and far between. No one

gives you that kind of money, especially for an untested idea. Untested idea, untested entrepreneur - banks are particularly wary of both. He had indeed wondered how he was going to raise finance for Laundry Pro. A dream is one thing, finance is another. He had run different scenarios in his head - different financing models and options.

The first source of finance should come from him. I mean if I won't risk *my* money why should others risk theirs' on my business? That seems basic. If I won't invest in my dream why should others invest? Every investor, except the Chief's benevolent variety will want to know how much of *his* resources he's committing. If he's not investing his money, maybe he knows something he's not disclosing, investors will reason. Especially since people are less diligent (and even crooked) with the funds

of others when their money is not involved. Non investment of personal funds implies a lack of faith in a business venture. He's under no illusion that Bashorun Dele Momodu is making an emotional investment, not a business investment. He won't get more of such investors except perhaps his mum and sisters. They'll make emotional investments too. An emotional investor invests in faith in a young man or woman; it's not so much an investment in the business as in the person. He hasn't even drawn up his business plan!

He thought long and hard on Bashorun Dele Momodu's generous gift and made a few decisions. First, he's converting the gift into an investment in Laundry Pro. If he performs he'll be able to ask for higher investment. That's now business not emotions! If just a gift he can't ask for more!

Two, he'll allocate shares to Chief based on overall share structure. Three, he'll make sure to use the money judiciously. This he can do by tying the money to something tangible, like machinery. Four, he'll work hard to validate Chief's faith in him. The business must succeed! To minimise failure he'll study, seek counsel and enlist as much professional help as he finds necessary and affordable. He needs to prove to Chief that given the chance, his generation can be responsible with capital and create value. Alternatively, he can convert Chief's grant to a loan and pay back the capital *plus* interest in the near future. But Chief may not like that idea. He may deem it an insult to his generosity. Bad idea! So, the only option is to convert Chief's gift to equity. Imagine the surprise when he gives Chief the share document to sign. That'll be

something! But how does he raise the remaining capital? Well, he thought: there's sweat equity! He can exchange shares for professional services. Rasha could have opted for shares as payment for legal services for instance. It's a good form of finance if you don't have money to pay. But the service provider must believe in delayed gratification. Must also believe in the business as well as in him. An exit plan must be in view. A good return on investment will make such worthwhile for the professional service provider.

But he needs to demonstrate the profit potential in his business plan. Writing a business plan is beginning to make more sense to him now. It's not just a business management tool. It's an investment logic tool, and facilitator. But not all professional service providers will want sweat equity, he

reasoned. Some will want outright payment. And some may want a mixed payment option - some cash plus equity. And they may demand a small cash commitment upfront to cover admin expenses, and the rest in equity. A lot will depend on how convincing his business case is. And how serious he's perceived. The general rule of investment is investment in idea *and* driver. A business driver must have capacity and capability. A fantastic business idea in the hands of a terrible driver is an investment disaster. He **MUST** demonstrate capacity **AND** capability. One is mental, the other is skill based.

So, three financing options so far (plus variants). There must be other options. He could lease equipment and pay from cash flow! Finance can be daunting, and frustrating.

But there are creative solutions. Can't succumb to victim's mentality. One just has to think! Nothing like "they're not helping us." "Who are they?" his father would say. Or "Government is not doing anything for us." Government??!!

An entrepreneur doesn't think that way! That kind of reasoning - dependency thinking - is dangerous and injurious to entrepreneurial health. "YOU have to make your way prosperous," his father always said. He's definitely making his way. In his brain!



## Chapter Twenty

*Nothing for nothing*

Sixty thousand dollars. A beautiful girlfriend lawyer. A business idea. One young man. Don rubbed his eyes and considered his options. He could start his laundry business very small and grow organically. Or he could seek additional investors and dilute his holding. There are pros and cons for each option. Thankfully, the business name scaled through at the Company Registry. Registration should be completed in a number of weeks.

Starting small has inherent drawbacks. His growth will be slower but the cost of

mistakes will be minimal. He'll have control and be less under pressure to perform and make returns to investors. But he can't access high level personnel with small funds. Unless of course he gives them shares in exchange for lower salary.

Seems in business you can't eat your cake and have it. Nothing goes for nothing! And there are only six tradable commodities in business: goodwill/favour, network, know-how, equity, assets and cash.

Every business invariably trades in these six commodities. The small man of course has huge disadvantages starting up. He lacks four to five of these tradables. (If he lacks all six he shouldn't be in business; can't be in business). But with hard work, diligence, knowledge, wisdom and perseverance, the small businessman can acquire more trade-

ables. And participate in The Great Exchange. He can acquire affluence, influence and power with the tradables. Business is a great exchange program! No matter what, he has to give up something for something. He can't have no cash, 100% ownership/equity and fast paced growth at the same time. Something has to give. Cash, equity and fast growth are like a triangle. \*Flips open his notebook, grabs a pen. Draws\*

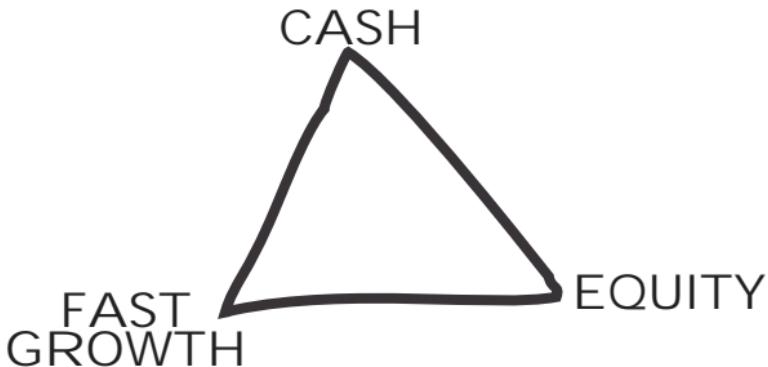


Fig.7

You can't be lacking in cash, insist on full ownership, and still expect fast growth. It's a contradiction. If you want full ownership and fast growth you must have cash. Otherwise you have to opt for organic growth - starting very small and ploughing back profit into the business. Slow slug.

He realised he has to inform his family about his plans. His mum will want to thank Chief for the money. He placed a call to his mum.

"Yes mum, I'm eating well!"

"Yes, I'm taking my vitamins!"

"Your uncle's daughter's first cousin's wedding is coming up?" "Yes I know the Horsfalls. The one who schooled in England?" "Yes, married to your Aunty Jane's sixth daughter..."

"My girl friend? Soon mum. Very soon!"

"Grandchildren? But you have four grandchildren already! Sorry about your arthritis. What did the doctor say?"

"No, don't send another dish!"

"An apple a day?... Justina giving you problems?..."

"Mum, mum! Need to come and see you. Saturday. Ok. 10am. Love you too!"



# Chapter Twenty-one

*The witch of Endor*

She sat hunched, staring at the console, her shoulders bunched, like a witch in dedicated consecrated affection. Into the terminal she gazed, like a matron of dark arts looking into a crystal ball. Against the backdrop of darkness, the terminal cast an eerie glow on her face. The room was barren, devoid of human static - a veritable operating environment for the forces of the night. Those forces reached out with gnarly pointed finger through plasmatised medium, conducting human thought. It was 2am... And Femi was searching the world wide web for an occassion of

accusation against Rasha.

An indiscretion, a lewdity... She typed in "@Rasha" on Twitter but a Rasharahnvard came up. The account was protected. A child's picture displayed on the profile page made her look dramatically stupid. Then she typed in "RashaDenton". Page came up. No picture, no tweets, no followers, no following. Big disappointment! She googled "Rasha". The suggestions had no Denton attached...Rasha Khalifa, Rasha Mendenhall, Rasha Drachkovitch... Rasha Diab, Rasha Dairah, Rasha Dababneh, Rasha Dewedah, Rasha Demashkieh, Rasha Dergham... \*Scroll\*... Rasha... Meaning of the name...>  
> [Http://babynames.com](http://babynames.com)> Young gazelle< Back> Rasha... Rasha Dr, Augusta, Rasha Moon/Facebook, Rasha Adam/Facebook...

Rasha Nuql/Pinterest... The only "Rasha Denton" is from a Twitter novel by one Leke Alder: "They'll wonder who Rasha Denton is." "Who's this Leke Alder?" She resumed rummaging for Rasha on the web but found nothing. It only confirmed her suspicion. She is too good to be true. And if it's too good to be true, it's too good to be true! Rasha Denton has no digital footprint except as a fictional character in a twitter novel.

She's watched enough movies to know that, that implies someone's covering his/her tracks... Does she have a criminal record? Or is she a spy?! A spy?... CIA?... That'll explain the incessant travels to the US... even the dressing...payment of sorts? Well, Femi is nothing without doggedness. She's an aliphatic double alliteration: Devious, dogged, determined! Gross, grave and

grievous! And a true daughter of her mother. Whatever it takes, she'll get Don! And when she's done, she's gone! She nodded her head in genuflection, picked up her phone, and dialled a number...

---

End of Season 1.  
Watch out for Season 2 of  
#NOVUS

---

Leke Alder will like to hear from you:

 leke@lekealder.com

 www.lekealder.com

 Leke Alder fan page on facebook

 @Leke\_Alder

# By Leke Alder

For more information, please visit [www.lekealder.com](http://www.lekealder.com)  
or send an email to [leke@lekealder.com](mailto:leke@lekealder.com)

## Life as I see It

A heart-seasoned understanding of life in prose, poetry and pictures.



## Minding your Business

A very practical guide to building and managing an enterprise. Touches parts many books cannot reach!



## BizKit®

The BizKit®, a business development kit for entrepreneurs.



## Brandit!

How to brand your company and steal market share.



## Conversations of a

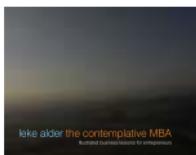
### 21st Century Saint

The principles of Power, Money, Business, Success and Politics through the lens of the Bible.



## The Contemplative MBA

Illustrated business lessons for entrepreneurs. It deals squarely with the challenges of business growth and the business life of the entrepreneur. Rich, practical and deep.



## Pilgrimage

The soul's pictorial journey through life's difficulties, complexities and imperfections. A coffee table book.



## Of Madmen, Senators and Ambassadors

An unusual expository of the history of Planet Earth and your covenanted role in it. A follow-up to Conversations of a 21st Century Saint.



## Grim White Green

Thoughts on Nigeria and Blackness.



## The Great Alchemy

The business innovation book on how to convert problems into business.



## Audio CD



# By Leke Alder contd.

For more information, please visit [www.lekealder.com](http://www.lekealder.com)  
or send an email to [leke@lekealder.com](mailto:leke@lekealder.com)

**The 4 Principles**  
4 insights. 4 days.  
A revolutionary change in perspective.  
A revolutionary change in your life.



**The 4 Masteries**  
This is a small book of great wisdom. It is a 4-day book, containing 4 life principles.



**My Boss is Demanding**  
The principles of success in employment. What every boss would like employees to know.



**LifeNotes (Notebooks)**  
A notebook series containing the writings of Leke Alder. Titles include: The man with the missing years, Some happiness....



**LifeNotes (Greeting cards)**  
Real life emotions, real life expressions.



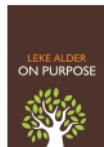
**LifeNotes (Motivational cards)**  
Tools for a hurting and needful world.

**080808**  
Novel. A political thriller with a peculiar twist.

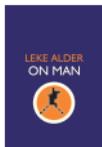


## Fundamentals Series

The interconnections between science, human affairs and theology.



**On Purpose**  
An exploration of the subject of purpose and success.



**On Man**  
A book for MEN (male and female!) It contains the principles of the 6th protocol.



**On Vision**  
This is a book about the principle of vision. It will give you an understanding on setting a vision for your life.



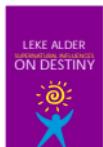
**On Image**  
Explores the principle of image, economic prosperity and political dominion.



**On Enterprise**  
This is a book on how to convert problems into business ideas.



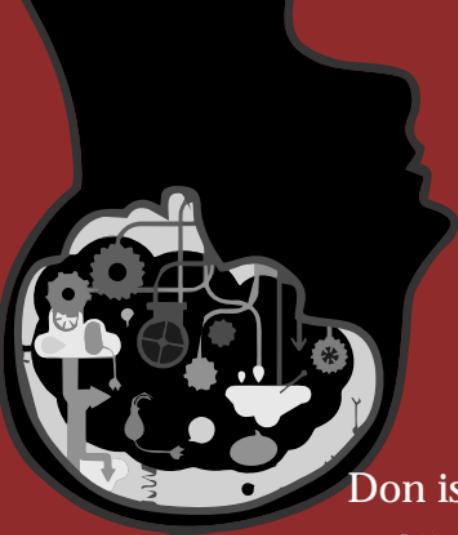
**On Destiny**  
How to discover your destiny.



**Supernatural Influences**  
**On Destiny**  
This book explores the direct influences of the supernatural on individual destiny.

## ABOUT LEKE ALDER

Leke Alder, a lawyer by training, is a strategy consultant to corporations and governments. He has spent a considerable length of his days on Earth meditating on the big questions of life. A polymath, he is the author of several books and a speaker at local and international fora. He was a panelist at Harvard Business School, Wharton Business School and Kellogg School of Business African Business Conferences. He hosted *Minding Your Business with Leke Alder*, a popular business radio programme on 92.3 Inspiration FM. He is particularly interested in small and medium enterprise development.



Don is a 26-year old going on 27. He has a crazy dream of starting a business but has no idea what to do.

Along his path comes a beautiful woman - a conspiracy of nature - Rasha! But a femme fatale lurks in the wings.

Follow Leke Alder as he takes you through the process of business conceptualisation, and so much more!



leke@lekealder.com



@Leke\_Alder

[www.lekealder.com](http://www.lekealder.com)